

\$1,000 every year in premiums to help pay for those who don't have coverage. We will help remove that burden from all working families. We will provide stability and choice to families and businesses. We will return health care decisions back where they belong, in the hands of patients and doctors, not insurance company bureaucrats. Rumors and misinformation and scare tactics about Medicare should not prevent us from passing meaningful health insurance reform legislation this year.

I yield the floor.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Republican leader is recognized.

THE DEMOCRATIC PLAN

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, the latest trillion-dollar, 1,000-page Democrat plan raises some questions—questions such as: What happens to Medicare?

Tens of millions of American seniors want to know.

Here is what we can say for sure.

The Democrat plan is a trillion-dollar experiment that cuts Medicare, raises taxes, and threatens the health care choices that millions of Americans now enjoy.

We know the Democrat plan will make massive cuts to Medicare—\$500 billion worth—to fund more government spending.

We know Medicare Advantage benefits will be slashed almost in half, causing many of the 11 million seniors enrolled in it to lose benefits, such as hearing aid coverage and dental care.

We know it contains nearly \$120 billion in cuts to hospitals that care for seniors, more than \$40 billion from home health agencies, and nearly \$8 billion from hospices.

And we know this: Medicare is already on the path to bankruptcy. Yet instead of trying to fix it, the Democrat plan is to use it as a piggy bank to pay for new government-run health care programs.

Republicans have tried to protect Medicare throughout this debate. Our amendments to do so were rejected in committee. We proposed an amendment to prevent cuts to skilled nursing facilities, long-term care hospitals, inpatient rehabilitation, hospice care and home health care. They rejected it. We offered an amendment to strike cuts that wouldn't improve Medicare. They rejected it. We offered an amendment to eliminate an unaccountable commission that would have the power to decide payments to Medicare providers. They rejected it. This isn't reform, and America's seniors know it.

Americans are demanding that their voices are heard in this debate. They want their questions answered, particularly when it comes to Medicare. They don't want the status quo. But

they don't want what Democrats are pushing either: a trillion-dollar experiment that cuts Medicare, raises taxes, limits choices, and makes health care more expensive. Americans have questions. They are not getting the answers they deserve.

I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Illinois is recognized.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, will the minority leader yield for a question?

Mr. MCCONNELL. I say to my friend from Illinois, I have an appointment in my office. I am happy to yield the floor.

Mr. DURBIN. I was going to ask the minority leader for the Republican plan for health care reform. Unfortunately, there is not a Republican plan for health care reform. What we have is a litany of criticism, a litany of complaint. That is what we have received during the course of this debate.

Senator MAX BAUCUS, chairman of the Finance Committee, took three of the most likely Republicans—Senators GRASSLEY, ENZI, and SNOWE—sat with them literally for months saying: Let's do this on a bipartisan basis. Meanwhile, the rest of us were a little frustrated, if not upset. We wanted to get moving, get into the debate. Let's get into this. It is a big issue. Health care reform is important. But Senator BAUCUS said: I have to try everything I can to make this a bipartisan effort. And he did. He spent months at it, day after day after day. What does he have to show for it? In the end, two of the Republican Senators walked out saying: We are not interested. The other said: I will wait and see.

So when they come to the floor critical of this debate on health care reform, the obvious question I would ask the Republican leader is: What is your plan? The status quo? You want to continue health care as we have it in America today? Do you want to try to defend what is happening to the cost of health care?

I was with a businessman from Chicago last week, a good, conscientious businessman, a young man, a principled man who has made money in his life but understands that he owes at least the people around him and his employees to give back. He said: Do you know what is going to happen to health insurance premiums for my employees? They go up 18 percent in 1 year, 18 percent. He said: I don't know if I can keep doing this. Guess what? His situation is being repeated over and over again. Businesses across America are dropping health care coverage for their employees because they can't afford it. The cost is out of hand.

Did we hear one word from the Republican leader about dealing with this cost escalation? No. The Republicans have no plan to deal with this. We are trying. It isn't easy. This is one-sixth of the economy. I love it when Senators come to the floor and call this a \$1 trillion experiment. Let's put it in

perspective. A trillion dollars is an enormous, almost unimaginable sum of money. But what will the cost of America's health care system be, for all of our health care, over the next 10 years? It will be \$35 trillion. So \$1 trillion in reform over 10 years represents less than 3 percent of the amount we are going to already be spending if we don't change the health care system and make it better. One trillion out of thirty-five million dollars? In perspective, we understand that if we are going to bring about real reform, we do have to invest in it.

Where will the trillion dollars go? The trillion dollars will go to help businesses with tax breaks to pay for health insurance for their employees. It will go to lower income working families so they can afford to buy health insurance. That is where the money will go.

Ultimately, do you know where it goes? It means that more and more Americans have health insurance coverage. Today, this day, and every day in America, 14,000 people will lose health insurance coverage. Imagine waking up this morning, heading off to work and learning during the course of the day that you have lost your job. It is happening. But you are not only losing your job, you are losing your health insurance. You go home at night and say to your spouse: Bad news. I just got the pink slip. I will be laid off in 2 weeks. But even worse news, our sick child with diabetes is no longer going to have health insurance coverage.

That is the reality for 14,000 families a day. When I hear the Republican leader criticize our effort to expand coverage of health insurance to the millions of Americans who are unprotected, to slow down this cancellation of health insurance for 14,000 Americans a day, my obvious question to him is: What is your alternative? What do you want to do? The answer is, nothing. Nothing except criticize.

There is nothing wrong with being critical. That is what this Chamber is all about. Ideas are up for debate. People will disagree. They will come up with their own point of view. That is good. A good healthy debate is what our government is about, what our Nation is about, and what can generate in the end a solution to our problems. But when I hear some of the things that have just been said: a 1,000-page bill. Does that bring you up short? Can't breathe? Your heart skips a beat, 1,000 pages? What if I told you this bill is addressing our health care system which consumes \$1 out of every \$6 in the American economy? One sixth of our gross domestic product deals with health care. Would it take 1,000 pages to address this in a responsible way? I am surprised it didn't take more. And how are we going to measure a bill in terms of its value? That bill is just too long. It is 1,000 pages long. I am sorry, maybe God got it right with the Ten Commandments and their brevity, but